



The

LIGHTHOUSE

Helping People | Changing Lives

1008 Bathurst Street • Toronto • ON M5R 3G7

Winter 2022

416-535-6262

Grupo De Abuelitos

Recently, we sat down with Samia Saad, Registered Psychotherapist and Hispanic Program Director, to learn about how The Spanish-speaking Seniors Group has been finding a new normal during these challenging times.

Interviewer: Samia, would you be able to give us some insight into the Grupo de Abuelitos program and how it has been functioning during this season?

Samia: Well, during the start of the Pandemic I was very unsure of how this program could continue to run. When we went into the state of emergency we had to close down our weekly Spanish-speaking Seniors Group. This was a very difficult but necessary decision. Within two weeks of closing this in-building program, volunteers approached me with concerns regarding our senior participants. Many of our seniors reported struggling with isolation, anxiety, depression, and fear. Collectively, we came to the conclusion that this was a need that required an immediate response. I have to give a lot of credit to our amazing volunteers. They worked very hard to modify this program. We actually call our seniors “abuelitos” which means grandparents. So it’s become our Grupo de Abuelitos or our Grandparents Group. We felt that this was a very fitting title for our program as there is a very beautiful sense of family that has developed.

Interviewer: Wow, that is an inspiring response to news of seniors facing this type of vulnerability. The idea of family amongst strangers is very powerful.



Samia: Yes, it is a response that is very beautiful to see and is linked to how we run our programs at The Lighthouse. Many of our clients often report that when participating in our centre’s programs, they experience a strong sense of family and belonging. This is something we actively cultivate through our leadership and volunteer training programs. With our Latin American programs we are intentional with our training which equips our volunteers to facilitate these programs in a way that results in that sense of family and belonging. We also attribute some of these results to Latin American culture and it’s tendency to value others as family regardless of biological ties.

Interviewer: How has this program (or this family) been able to continue on during the Pandemic? What have been some of its goals and objectives?

Samia: When I first started this program many years ago, I initially intended it to be a program with the target of supporting Spanish speaking seniors. I always say you can plan a program with specific objectives and goals but during evaluation you’ll find that the program can take a life of its own and that other needs can be met. When the Pandemic started, volunteers mobilized to assist seniors with installing an App called WhatsApp on their phones as a way to stay connected. Volunteers and seniors shared information and developed a rotation where seniors were receiving calls, video chats, recordings, pictures, words of encouragement, and responses to their needs throughout the week... *Continued on Page 3*



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The Lighthouse invites you to support us in our Walk-a-Thon Fundraiser to raise funds for our community and programs.

Consider hiking, strolling with a friend, a prayer walk, a nature walk, etc. with friends or family at any place and time of your choosing on Saturday March 26, 2022.

To register and learn more information on fundraising contact The Lighthouse by calling 416-535-6262, emailing us at info@lighthousecentre.ca or by visiting our website.



The Lighthouse has been noticing an increase in Food Bank Program participants. At the same time, we have also noticed our food donations and stock is sometimes spread quite thin to meet this growing need. The Lighthouse Food Bank could use your help with filling our food hampers. Consider collecting donations of the following with friends, family, your school or community group!

Donation List

Food Items: Large bags of rice, pasta and pasta sauce, canned meat (tuna, spam, sardines, corned beef), canned soup, canned veggies or fruit, cereal or oatmeal

Hygiene products: Soap, shampoo/conditioner, deodorant, hair products, tooth paste, tooth brushes, feminine hygiene products, etc.

Specialty requested cooking items: spices, honey, syrup, herbs, cooking oils, baking ingredients



COME JOIN US!!

SATURDAY MARCH 26, 2022

The Lighthouse Walkathon

A 5KM OR 10KM WALK ANYWHERE

CONTACT INFO:
THE LIGHTHOUSE AT 416-535-6262

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.LIGHTHOUSECENTRE.CA



We're
Thankful
for...

The Lighthouse has been blessed and thankful to receive two donations towards purchasing grocery gift cards, PPE, and air filtration systems (for the hope of opening our doors for in-building programs in the future).

Thank you to Daily Bread Food Bank for
\$3800.00 towards grocery gift cards

Thank you to United Way for **\$5000.00**
towards grocery gift cards, PPE, and
air filtration systems



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Samia: Volunteers helped connect seniors to information on Covid-19 safety measures, vaccines clinics, assistance with booking appointments, assistance with printing proof of vaccination records, as well as food and shopping deliveries. During meetings, we learned that seniors were continuing to report challenges with depression and isolation. When meeting in person became a possibility, we knew we had to do something. We realized that meeting in The Lighthouse would not be an option as there is not enough space to distance well. Thankfully, we were able to form a connection with a church in Toronto called Boom Church. The church allowed us to make use of their larger hall to host in person meetings for our program. We began to meet in person weekly, while also continuing online support and connection. This meant more work but was the best move for the health of this community. At the same time, as Program Director, I continued to train, equip, and empower leaders within this group to be able to facilitate talks and testimonials. Part of this work is to make sure leaders are supported and emboldened.



Interviewer: *This group sounds like a well oiled machine, where everyone has a part to play. I'm curious to hear more about these facilitated talks and testimonials. Would you be able to tell us more about that?*

Samia: Yes, it's quite neat. Last year, I had done workshops on how program leaders and volunteers could facilitate talks. While facilitating talks with this specific group, the concept of sharing stories came up organically. At first, seniors were reserved with the idea of sharing testimonials but now we are hearing more seniors share stories with confidence. They share about their lives, what they've learned and what lessons, knowledge, or ideas they'd want to pass on. Both our seniors and our volunteers have been stepping up to prepare these testimonials for the group. These testimonials have been a way to embody empowerment amongst these different generations. They are a way to learn from each other, to honour their own stories, and reflect on the past, present and future. This was a pilot method that we tested out when facilitating this group and it truly has been very successful. Rather than focusing on rigid frameworks we focus on listening to the interests of our seniors and establishing a participatory model.



Interviewer: *What a meaningful way to strengthen and build community. Can you touch on the participatory model and the benefit of basing programs on the interests of participants?*

Samia: Yes, this participatory model is very intentional. Every person involved in our programs has a story of trial and are often part of very vulnerable groups. Some of our leaders and volunteers are refugees or newcomers, some are facing immigration processes, most are facing low income and/or employment challenges. In fact, most of our leaders and volunteers have also been, or still are, clients of The Lighthouse. They have gone through therapy and/or leadership training and in doing so the holistic aspect of how we work here at The Lighthouse can be seen. Clients become ready and motivated to learn how to be leaders and how to build an empowered community for themselves, their families and the vulnerable around them. In turn, the community benefits, this is precisely why this seniors group has been able to continue the way it has. It has been an intentional process of training, therapy work and seeing the fruits of what can happen when we empower our leaders. In this case, the result is a thriving family called the Grupo de Abuelitos.



From Rob's Desk

As a New Year begins, reflection on the past and looking forward to the future takes place. This happens each year at The Lighthouse with trepidation and excitement. It helps us see what we accomplished and the direction we want to continue.



Recently I had a discussion with someone who asked, "How has Covid-19 affected you as an organization since many charities are struggling financially?" My response was positive: I stated, "Covid has not placed any financial burdens on The Lighthouse. Instead, Covid has placed a spotlight on The Lighthouse as it helps individuals emotionally, mentally and physically. Our supporters want to help those who are in need." We see that The Lighthouse has been blessed in 2021 through the support of our supporters.

Along with the financial support from our supporters; we also received a number of grants from different organizations. In 2021 we received a grant from Second Harvest and Daily Bread Food Bank to provide aid for the foodbank. These grants enabled us to provide gift cards, purchase food and hire some part time staff. We also received a grant from Canada Summer Jobs to hire three summer students. Wow!!! What a blessing! Already in 2022, we have received a couple of grants to aid our food bank. The Lighthouse continues to be blessed by many.

The Lighthouse is also excited about the future. In 2022, The Lighthouse plans to hire a new staff person for the Community Support Program that we are excited to be implementing. Covid has stretched the needs of the community and this new staff person will help our community navigate and respond to some of those needs.

As Board and Staff, we want to thank all of our supporters. Whether you gave financially, volunteered or donated clothes, food, etc. We say "Thank You for enriching the lives of many."

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Thank you for being partners with us in this ministry.



Yes, I would like to help with a donation of \$ _____

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☐ Visa/MasterCard # _____

Expiry Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Postal Code _____

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- ☐ Monthly Visa or MasterCard donation - makes it easy for you and for us
- ☐ Canada Helps on line at www.canadahelps.org
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- ☐ United Way Payroll Deduction - just provide our CRA # and address
- ☐ Matched Corporate Giving - many companies match employee donations
- ☐ E-transfer sent to info@lighthousecentre.ca

Please mail your contribution to:

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Toronto ON M5R 3G7